

#### § 1466.4

*Veteran farmer or rancher* means a producer who meets the definition in section 2501(e) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2279(e)).

*Wildlife* means non-domesticated birds, fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and mammals.

*Wildlife habitat* means the aquatic and terrestrial environments required for fish and wildlife to complete their life cycles, providing air, food, cover, water, and spatial requirements.

#### § 1466.4 National priorities.

(a) The following national priorities, consistent with statutory resource concerns that include soil quality, water quality and quantity, plants, energy, wildlife habitat, air quality, and related natural resource concerns, may be used in EQIP implementation:

(1) Reductions of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds consistent with total maximum daily loads (TMDL) where available; the reduction of surface and groundwater contamination; and the reduction of contamination from agricultural sources, such as animal feeding operations;

(2) Conservation of ground and surface water resources;

(3) Reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards;

(4) Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land;

(5) Promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation including development and improvement of wildlife habitat; and

(6) Energy conservation to help save fuel, improve efficiency of water use, maintain production, and protect soil and water resources by more efficiently using fertilizers and pesticides.

(b) In consultation with other Federal agencies and Indian Tribes, NRCS may undertake periodic reviews of the national priorities and the effects of program delivery at the State and local

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levels to adapt the program to address emerging resource issues. NRCS may:

(1) Use the national priorities to guide the allocation of EQIP funds to the NRCS State offices;

(2) Use the national priorities in conjunction with State, Indian Tribes, and local priorities to assist with prioritization and selection of EQIP applications; and

(3) Periodically review and update the national priorities utilizing input from the public, Indian Tribes, other Federal and State agencies, and affected stakeholders to ensure that the program continues to address priority resource concerns.

#### § 1466.5 Outreach activities.

NRCS will establish program outreach activities at the national, State, Tribal, and local levels in order to ensure that producers whose land has environmental problems and priority resource concerns are aware and informed that they may be eligible to apply for program assistance. Special outreach will be made to eligible producers with historically low participation rates, including but not restricted to, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, small-scale, or beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran farmers or ranchers, Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders. NRCS provides outreach so as not to limit producer participation because of size or type of operation, or production system, including small-scale, specialty crop, and organic production.

#### § 1466.6 Program requirements.

(a) Program participation is voluntary. An applicant must develop an EQIP plan of operations for the eligible land to be treated that serves as the basis for the EQIP contract. Under EQIP, NRCS provides its participants with technical assistance and payments to plan and apply needed conservation practices.

(b) To be eligible to participate in EQIP, an applicant must:

(1) Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions found at part 12 of this title;

(2) Must be a producer as determined by NRCS;